

CHRYSLER 300F



PHOTOS BY CHRYSLER CORPORATION, ERIC RICKMAN

For the sixth straight year, Chrysler's limited-production 300 series offers an extra-special hot sedan for the man who wants style, luxury and performance in one package.

By RAY BROCK

We have just found the perfect gift for the man who has everything—or at least for the man who has everything but a really exciting car. This ideal present is the latest of Chrysler's special 300 series and goes under the name of the 1960 300F. The price tag on this car is somewhat higher than most of the cars we test but judging from letters that arrive at our desk, we have a larger number of readers who are not only interested in the higher priced performance models but actually have the means to pay for them.

Chrysler's 300 is a limited production model and as such does not have to adhere to the rules usually followed by Detroit when building a large car to sell the American public. This car is designed as a sports-type touring car which will cover the wide open prairies in rapid fashion while providing a good degree of comfort, safety and styling. The 300F has stiffer suspension components and more horsepower than any other car in its price class, therefore will deliver a safer high speed

ride, handle better and accelerate faster than the other cars. On the other hand, it will also give a choppier ride at slow speeds and use more gas.

The 300F is available in two models, a two-door hardtop sedan and a convertible. Everything else about the two models is the same with the exception of price; the convertible is a few hundred dollars more. Past practice with 300 models has been to use the same body shell as other Chrysler models but finish is with more luxurious leather seats, fit distinctive chrome trim, use a racy-looking grille and then make such other changes as mentioned before; stiffer suspension, higher horsepower engine, etc. This procedure is retained for 1960 with the exception of the car's interior. Instead of just taking the regular Chrysler seats and fitting them with leather upholstery, the stylists completely reworked the interior for '60 with four individual bucket-type seats replacing the conventional front and rear bench seats. In layout, the seating ar-

range closely resembles that of the four-passenger T-Birds. The materials and styling are much more elaborate than the T-Birds though.

General dimensions of the 300F are identical to those of other similar models bearing the Chrysler nameplate with overall length almost 220 inches, or 18 feet 4 inches. Maximum width is 79.4 inches and the design height of the two-door hardtop is 55.1 inches with four passengers. Wheelbase is 126 inches, the front wheel tread is 61.2 inches and the rear tread is 60 inches. Compared to a member of the so-called low-priced group, the Plymouth Fury we tested last month, the 300F differs less than an inch in all measurements except the wheelbase and overall length. The 300 has 8 inches more wheelbase and is 10 inches longer than the '60 Fury. In the weight department, the scales dropped much lower when the 300F was driven on the platform. The hardtop test car weighed 4640 pounds versus 4080 for the Fury, both full of fuel but minus passengers or any other added weight. The reason for the comparison of size and weight between the 300F and the '60 Plymouth Fury will be discussed a little later.

Unitized construction is used for the 300F body just as it is for all other 1960 Chrysler Corporation cars except the Imperial. This type of structure is very solid and rattle-free due to lack of bolted and riveted joints. An elaborate rust-proofing method is used whereby the bodies are dipped in huge tanks to make sure that all hidden corners are thoroughly protected. The 1960 unit body construction is a definite step forward for Chrysler and helps considerably toward improving the quality of these cars compared to those of previous years.

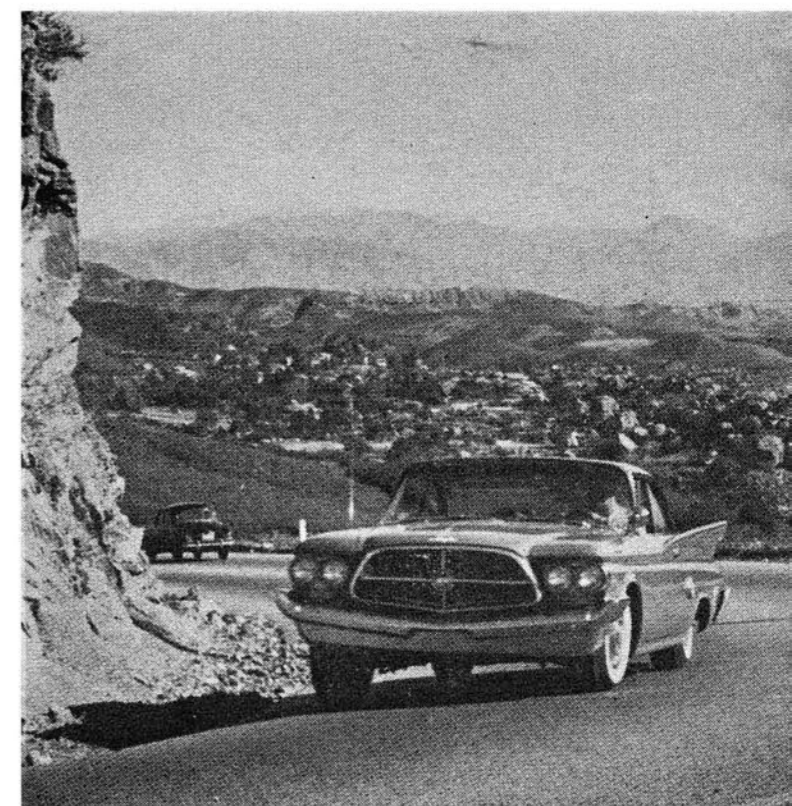
The suspension system is changed very little from what it was in 1959 with torsion bars used for the independent front wheel springing and longitudinal semi-elliptical leaf springs used at the rear. The only noticeable changes to either front or rear suspension is in the mounting bushings which have been redesigned to effectively cancel road noise between the spring anchors and the brackets welded to the unitized body.

As we go to press, exact spring rates have not been released but figures from service bulletins indicate that the 300F has approximately 40% stronger springs on the front and 50% more on the rear than a 1960 New Yorker model. These estimates would give the 300F a front spring "rate" of about 175 pounds per inch at the wheel which means that a load of 175 pounds over each front wheel would cause the car to drop one inch lower at that point. Applying the 50% figure to the rear leaf spring would give a rate of approximately 200 pounds per inch at the wheel. Again, we throw in the figures on the '60 Plymouth Fury as a comparison, 130 at the front and 135 at the rear wheel. Since the 300F is a heavier car, it requires higher spring rates than the Plymouth but even with weight allowances, the 300F has a much stiffer suspension.

Something the 300F has that is not used on Plymouths is a heavy-duty stabilizer bar between the front wheel lower control arms. The 3/8-inch diameter bar aids greatly in resisting body roll on corners. Heavy-duty tubular shock absorbers also aid the higher spring rates and front stabilizer bar in controlling the 300F securely at high speeds.

Brakes for the 1960 models have been changed but very little from what they were in 1959. They are the same size with 12-inch diameter, 2 1/2-inch wide drums used both front and rear for a total lining area of 251 square inches. The only change made was to revise the backing plates so that the shoes are kept in better alignment. The main purpose of this is to eliminate brake squeal; it doesn't actually give a more effective brake. This Total-Contact braking system as Chrysler prefers to call it is, in our opinion, one of the few sub-standard features of the 300F. They are of the same basic size and design as the brakes used on 1957 Chrysler cars and have been increasingly overloaded each year since that time. The 300F brakes (power assist is standard) will stop the car adequately from high speed if the need should arise but not more than

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TOP—Well filled engine compartment of the 300F includes power steering, power brakes and dual-quad Ram Induction intake system all as standard production items. The standard engine is 413 cubic inches, rated 375 hp. Optional engine is 400 hp.

BOTTOM—Cornering ability of the 300F is exceptional despite its size and weight. Heavy-duty suspension parts and good weight distribution combine with terrific engine response to make the 300 drive like a smaller car. Curb weight is 4640 pounds.

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LEFT—Imported Pont-à-Mousson four-speed manual transmission is an optional item together with the 400 hp engine. The shift lever is conveniently placed in the raised driveshaft tunnel. The tachometer being indicated is cable driven from the distributor but is mounted in a bad spot.

RIGHT—The 300F body shell is the same as other '60 Chrysler two-doors but has different trim, wheel covers, grille and interior. The lowers in the rear of the hood are real but blanked off from the inside. The wheelbase is 126 inches and the overall car length is just over 18 feet.

once or twice in rapid succession. On steep downhill mountain roads, the brakes become quickly overheated after a few applications. The small, 14-inch wheels and wide tires so completely shroud the brake drums that cooling air cannot circulate freely around them. We definitely feel that a car with the speed potential of the 300F needs better brakes.

On the subject of brakes, the parking brake for all 1960 Chrysler products except the Valiant is on the output shaft of the transmission. This has been a Chrysler practice for a number of years and has been a very trouble-free arrangement in the past. Being on the transmission tailshaft, the lining is not subject to wear such as other parking brakes which operate on the rear wheel brake shoes. Also, application of the rear wheel type of parking brake after hard driving will often cause the drums to distort as they cool over the expanded brake shoes. With the parking drum on the transmission output shaft, this will not happen. Prior to 1960, the Chrysler parking brake used a pull-type T-handle beneath the dash. For 1960, this has been changed to a foot pedal arrangement with a finger release.

Just one word of caution, the new foot pedal parking lever does not seem to "set" the brake as solid as did the other type so must be "stomped" very firmly when parking on steep grades. Chrysler's automatic transmission has no "Park" position so this is very important.

Steering for the 300F is quick and positive which makes it a good match for the performance of the car. Only power steering is offered for 1960 which is just as it should be since a manual ratio slow enough to permit the average driver to steer the heavy car would be dangerously slow in mountainous country. The Full-Time power steering ratio is 15.7:1 and is, without a doubt, the correct ratio. We have on occasion heard complaints about the sensitive touch of Chrysler power steering but only by persons who have never owned a recent Chrysler product. It doesn't take long to get used to and then the type offered by non-Chrysler cars seems to be the awkward one.

Two engines are available for the 300F. The standard engine is a 413 cubic inch V8 with 4.18-inch bore, 3.75-inch stroke, 10:1 compression ratio, a horsepower rating of 375 @ 5000



The gasoline filler neck is concealed beneath the rear license plate bracket with a 23-gallon capacity tank. 14-inch wheels are fitted with nylon Supreme grade tires. The 300F Chrysler is available for sale in only four colors; black, white, red and a burnt orange.



rpm and 495 lbs/ft. of torque at 2800 rpm. An optional version is identical except for camshaft timing and has a 400 horsepower rating at 5200 rpm with 465 lbs/ft. of torque at 3600 rpm. The standard 375 hp engine uses hydraulic lifters and it is thought that the 400-horsepower job will use solid lifters and adjustable rocker arms for increased rpm's.

Both of these engines use Chrysler's new Ram Injection systems which has a Carter four-barrel carburetor on either side of the engine feeding the opposite bank of cylinders through 30-inch long intake passages. In operation and appearance, the 300F Ram Induction is identical to that used by Dodge, Plymouth and DeSoto. It capitalizes on the velocity of air within the long intake passages to "pack" air/fuel charge into the cylinders at slightly better than atmospheric pressure for a mild supercharge. This supercharge is designed for maximum efficiency at 2800 rpm on the standard engine so that the extra torque derived from the ram action will be available in the rpm range best suited for everyday driving. If you think that perhaps the new Ram Induction system is just a publicity "gimmick" to add interest to the 300F, wait until you see the acceleration figures of this car.

The standard transmission for the 300F is a heavy-duty version of Chrysler's automatic TorqueFlite. It has three forward speeds with ratios of 2.45, 1.45 and direct. Increased oil pressure and stronger shifting servos ensure positive shifts; in fact, full throttle application from a standing start will result in a rear wheel "chirp" and a solid belt to the seat of the pants when the unit shifts from first to second gears. When full throttle starts are made in Drive gear, the 1-2 upshift is made at about 45 mph and the 2-3 upshift at just over 75 mph. By using number 1 push button, the transmission will stay in first gear until the driver pushes either the number 2 button or Drive. In timed acceleration runs, the best results were recorded when the 1-2 shift was made before 50 mph. Chrysler's TorqueFlite can also be downshifted into second gear for a braking assist in mountainous country and will aid greatly at speeds below 70 mph. The torque converter has a maximum stall ratio of 2.2 at 1975 rpm which is both a high multiplication ratio and a high stall speed for such a big powerplant. This results in a "free-wheeling" transmission at low speeds when the throttle foot is lifted and although this feature has helped Chrysler win several economy runs in the past, it also places added load on the braking system.

The optional transmission for the 300F is a four-speed synchro-mesh Pont-à-Mousson manual shift unit which Chrysler

purchases from a French concern. It is a heavy-duty racing transmission with husky gears and an aluminum case with a stubby top-mounted shift lever that sticks up through the raised tunnel between the front seats. It has forward ratios of 3.35, 1.96, 1.36 and direct. Reverse ratio is 3.11. The Pont-à-Mousson gearbox is planned as a limited production option and is available only with the optional 400 horsepower engine. Clutch details are not complete as we write this but will probably be 11-inches in diameter with heavy spring pressures.

A 3.31 rear axle ratio is standard with either the TorqueFlite or 4-speed manual transmissions but a wide selection of optional ratios is available for the customer to choose from. The listed ratios include 2.93, 3.15, 3.23, 3.54, 3.73 and are all optional with either transmission. All ratios can also be fitted with the Sure-Grip limited-slip differential for increased traction. For any ratio lower than 3.31 (numerically higher), the Sure-Grip is, in our estimation, a required extra.

We usually don't get into a discussion on tires but in this case we might mention that the 300F is factory equipped with 9.00x14 Goodyear Captive-Air nylon tubless tires. These tires are of premium quality and feature a two-chamber construction for added blowout protection. Being nylon, they flat-spot in cold weather, which means that left sitting for any length of time when cold, a flat spot will occur at the point of contact with the ground to cause a bounce and thumping noise until driven for a few miles to round them out. Since the premium tires are heavier in construction, this flat-spotting seems to last several miles longer than with a medium-priced nylon tire. Our experience with tires leads us to believe that this heavy premium tire is not particularly the best type for prolonged high-speed driving such as some Texan might subject the tire to in the middle of the summer. For prolonged speeds in excess of 100 mph, a lighter nylon tire with less heat build-up properties would seem better suited.

Slipping into the driver's seat of the 300F for the first time is quite an experience. The bucket seats are not only very comfortable with their perforated leather covering, but quite handsome as well. The interior is definitely designed for just four passengers, with wide, padded arm rests between the seats both front and rear. Beneath these arm rests, a medium sized glove or catch-all compartment is provided for the convenience of passengers. Rich, black carpeting is used throughout the interior, not only for the floor pan but also up the sides of the high tunnel between the seats, on the folding backs of the front

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Distinctive grille opening has the 300F emblem supported by a horizontal and vertical chrome bar with a black plastic egg-crate behind. Massive front bumper wraps around the fenders for maximum protection. The hood release is operated from the dash.

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seats, door kick panels and even the area around the rear seat backs. Good looking aluminum and rubber squares are used in the driver's foot area to resist wear.

The instrument panel of the 300F is basically the same as that used in other '60 Chrysler cars and is a very legible, well designed group. The best part of this panel is not apparent until nighttime when the lights are turned on. A new lighting method called Panelescent provides instrument illumination that is completely free of glare, yet is much easier to read than former types. Words cannot adequately describe the Panelescent lighting; it must be seen to be appreciated. The only dial in the whole car which can't be instantly checked is the tachometer and this is not because it isn't properly lighted, instead it is because the tach dial is poorly located low in the transmission tunnel. Not only that, the tach on our test car would bounce wildly during low gear acceleration and usually stick at about 3500 rpm which made it useless. To be useful, a tachometer should be as near as possible to eye level directly in front of the driver.

As a whole, we were greatly impressed with the interior styling and finish of the 300F. There were a couple of rough spots on our test car which a competent dealer service department should be able to smooth out, such as sticky power windows, air leaks around the side windows, etc.

You recall that we compared the 300F and the '60 Plymouth Fury for size, weight and suspension earlier. The reason for this comparison is that we were quite surprised to discover the 300F does not feel like a bigger, heavier car. It does, in fact, feel more like a smaller car than does the Plymouth. This last is due to the heavy-duty suspension of the 300F; the '60 Fury does not offer heavy-duty suspension components or front stabilizer bar as standard equipment. The stiffer suspension of the 300 gives the most secure ride of any American

car on the road today. Although a slightly choppy ride is given at slow speeds, to us it was definitely not objectionable and even the most critical person in favor of a soft ride would probably not notice the firm suspension on average city streets.

At high speed through twisting mountain passes or over undulating desert dips, the 300F is head and shoulders above any other car on the road. The suspension is ideal for these conditions and the ride delivered is fantastic. Throttle response, too, is positive and delivers power in the desired quantity just when you need it going through a curve. Only in the tightest of corners did we notice any stutter on the part of the carburetion. The hesitation was momentary and an extra jab of the throttle would bring the engine back to life. The maneuverability and lively performance of the 300F belie the fact that it is a big, heavy automobile. As we mentioned earlier, our test car weighed 4640 pounds minus passengers—2480 pounds, or 53.4% of the weight rested on the front wheels and the remaining 46.6% was on the rear. This ratio reveals the 300F to have a smaller percentage on the front wheels than the average American sedan and is at least partially responsible for the good handling characteristics and lack of exaggerated understeer usually associated with a heavy car.

Our test car was a two-door hardtop model with the standard 375 horsepower engine, TorqueFlite transmission, power steering, power brakes, power seat, power windows, radio, heater and miscellaneous other extras. Most of the items just mentioned are standard equipment for the 300F and help explain why the car weighs over 4600 pounds. The acceleration for a car of such weight borders on the fantastic. Remember that Fury we tested last month with SonoRamic 361 engine? The 300F actually bettered it in most phases of our acceleration test. From a standing start to 30 mph, the 300 needed 3.4 seconds, the Fury did it in 3.1; 0 to 60 mph, 7.4

for the 300, 7.5 for the Fury; 30 to 60 mph passing, 5.1 seconds for the 300, 5.6 for the Fury; 50 to 80 mph passing, 7.1 seconds for the 300, 7.2 for the Fury. The 300 needed 16 seconds flat to cover the standing ¼-mile with a speed of 90.9 mph at the end while the Fury covered the same distance in 15.6 seconds and 90 mph flat. The obvious conclusion is that the Fury was quicker off the starting line while the 300 had more speed once under way. No matter how you look at the figures, 16 seconds flat and almost 91 miles per hour in the quarter mile is just plain rapid movement for a car weighing so much.

With all of the cubic inches, carburetion and weight, you naturally would not expect fuel economy to be anything to write home about. We must admit that the impressive throttle response at all speeds probably prompted us to jab the pedal more often than we normally would so the overall mileage for nearly 750 miles of test driving averaged 12 miles per gallon. Our best was 12.5 mpg cruising on the open road at 65 mph or better. Our worst was 10.8 mpg but this particular tank load included all of our acceleration tests and some high speed mountain driving up to more than 5000 feet elevation. We mentioned that perhaps some sacrifice in fuel economy would be the end result of such a hot performance model but actually, the 300F is no worse than many of the high priced luxury models. The 300 has a 23 gallon capacity so cross-country trips could probably be made in steps of 250 to 300 miles between fuel stops, no worse than at least two of our new American economy cars.

Our overall opinion of the 1960 300F is that it is a superb automobile. We have never had any particular like for a large automobile but this car feels so agile and secure on the road that you soon forget it is large. The acceleration will keep you ahead of or next to any Detroit model equipped with an automatic transmission and although the mileage isn't great, many cars offering less do as bad or worse. Our chief complaint is that the brakes won't take much abuse. Other faults we found in our test car were of a minor nature and could easily be remedied through dealer service.

We view cars we test with a pretty critical eye and often are more than happy to finish a test, but with the 300F we were reluctant to return the car to Young and Rubicam, Chrysler's advertising agency. Perhaps it was the feeling of importance we got as we watched passengers in nearby cars eye the 300F as we drove down the road or maybe it was the way the general public oohed and aahed over the car as it sat at the curb. Anyway, we sort of got the impression that the 300F is the ideal gift for the man who wants everything.

TOP—No, it isn't a bad picture, the steering wheel is actually flattened slightly on the bottom for easier driver entry and exit. A full set of instruments is used, not warning lights, and they are exceptionally well grouped directly in front of driver.

CENTER—There is room for just four in the 300F but they are certainly in style with comfortable bucket seats covered with real leather plus deep pile black carpeting. Front seats swivel but interfere with the rear passenger leg room when used.

BOTTOM—Huge rear window has aluminized upper third to cut down sun glare on rear seat passengers. Luggage space beneath the deck lid embossed with fake Continental kit is huge. If you like fins, and many do, these will surely make you happy.

